

homes without warning, auctioning off their property, and blocking their access to bury their deceased in a place of their choosing, instead requiring them to use a mass grave site.

In its 2021 Report to Congress on International Religious Freedom, the United States Department of State reported that government officials continue to disseminate anti-Baha'i messaging using both traditional and social media. Further, the community is so stigmatized that private sector employers often refuse to hire those of the Baha'i or dismiss them from their jobs.

Today, I call on my House colleagues to stand with Martin Gorji and every member of the Baha'i community in Iran. I call on the Iranian government to immediately release not only Mr. Gorji, but every prisoner of conscience in Iran who is incarcerated simply for their beliefs. It is time to end this egregious repression of religious minorities.

INTRODUCTION OF THE UNITED STATES COLORED TROOPS CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 7, 2023

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the United States Colored Troops Congressional Gold Medal Act, which would award the Congressional Gold Medal to the African Americans who served with Union forces during the Civil War. Approximately 200,000 African American men served in the Union Army and 19,000 African American men served in the Union Navy. I am proud to present this overdue expression of our national appreciation for these remarkable individuals. Senator CORY BOOKER has introduced the companion bill.

Since the colonial era, African Americans have served the United States in times of war. While African American men served in the Navy since its establishment, there was resistance to enlisting them to take up arms for the Union Army at the start of the Civil War. It was not until January 1, 1863, when President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, that the Union Army was ordered to receive African American men. On May 22, 1863, the United States War Department issued General Order Number 143, which established the Bureau of Colored Troops for the recruitment and organization of regiments of the Union Army composed of African American men, called the United States Colored Troops (USCT). Leaders such as Frederick Douglass encouraged African Americans to enlist to advance the cause of citizenship: "Once let the [B]lack man get upon his person the brass letter, 'U.S.', let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on [E]arth that can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship," wrote Douglass.

African American sailors constituted a significant segment of the Union Navy, making up 20 percent of the Navy's total enlisted force. Although there were rank restrictions on African Americans in the Navy before the Civil War, this policy changed after the establishment of the USCT, when the Union Navy started to compete with the Union Army for

enlistment of African Americans. Yet, in practice, most African Americans could not advance beyond the lowest ranks of "boy" and "landsmen." In the Union Army, the USCT fought at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana; in Petersburg, Virginia; and in Nashville, Tennessee, among other sites. The USCT at first were paid less, were given used uniforms and poor equipment and could never become officers. Many USCT were assigned as guards on fortifications throughout the Union, including the Defenses of Washington, which, by 1865, was one of the most heavily fortified cities in the world. During the Civil War, African American women were not allowed to formally enlist as soldiers or sailors, though they served as nurses, cooks, spies and scouts for the Union Army and the Union Navy.

For generations after the Civil War, the contributions of the African Americans who served with Union forces were excluded from historical memory. Not until Public Law No. 102-412, which I sponsored and which authorized the establishment of a memorial on federal land to honor African Americans who served with Union forces during the Civil War, were they officially commemorated. The African American Civil War Memorial, located in the District of Columbia, features a bronze statue of soldiers, an African American sailor and family, and is surrounded by The Wall of Freedom, which lists the names of the members of the USCT.

Patriots and heroes who rose in service to a nation that would not fully recognize them, the African Americans who served the Union during the Civil War deserve our recognition for their contributions to the grant of emancipation and citizenship for nearly 4 million enslaved people and to the preservation of the Union.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

RECOGNIZING THE 175TH ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST BANK OF ALABAMA

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 7, 2023

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 175th Anniversary of First Bank of Alabama.

The City of Talladega was incorporated in 1835 and as it began to grow and thrive, Major James Isbell opened a banking business in 1848. Through the Civil War and reconstruction, the bank stayed open and in 1893 applied for and received a National Bank Charter. The name of the bank was officially changed to The Isbell National Bank of Talladega.

In 1963, after almost 100 years in the "old bank" building, Isbell National Bank moved to a new location on North Street East.

In 1968, the Talladega Superspeedway officially opened. The following year, the bank opened a full service branch in Lincoln, Alabama. In 1988, another branch was opened in Munford, Alabama.

In 2015, The First National Bank of Talladega Board of Directors voted to make the bank a state-chartered bank and adopt the new name, First Bank of Alabama. In 2017, First Bank acquired Bank of Wedowee and ex-

panded their presence into Randolph County. The following year, First Bank opened their seventh office in Clay County and in 2020 an office in Calhoun County.

In 2021, SouthFirst acquisition was finalized, and the bank added 2 more offices in Sylacauga and expanded into Chilton County. In 2022, two offices were added in Cleburne County.

On February 14, 2023, the Annual Shareholder meeting will be held at the Talladega office to celebrate the anniversary of the bank. First Bank is Alabama's oldest, continuously operated bank in the State of Alabama, third oldest in the Southeast and 36th oldest in the country. The bank is led by Talladega native, J. Chad Jones, the bank's 13th President and CEO.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in recognizing this milestone for my friends at First Bank of Alabama and wishing them a happy 175th anniversary.

OPPOSITION TO H.J. RES. 26 DISAPPROVING THE ACTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COUNCIL IN APPROVING THE REVISED CRIMINAL CODE ACT OF 2022

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 7, 2023

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to H.J. Res. 26 a resolution disapproving the action of the District of Columbia Council in approving the Revised Criminal Code Act of 2022.

This resolution is not only a brazen and misguided measure seeking to uphold decades of racially systemic policies of criminal injustice, it is an insulting attempt to trample on the rights and the will of the people in the District of Columbia.

By subjecting thousands of Black residents of Washington D.C. to criminalization and incarceration, the Revised Criminal Code Act of 2022 was the first comprehensive revision of the D.C. code since the year 1901, something that should've been revised long before.

However, in contrast to the majority of other states, D.C. did not update its criminal statutes throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

As a result of the antiquated legislation, which had been in place for decades, the human rights and freedoms of Washingtonians has been compromised, resulting in D.C. having one of the highest imprisonment rates in the nation, whereby Black males account for more than 95 percent of those who are behind bars.

The 2022 revision was a necessary push forward, and for the Republicans within this congress to attempt to undo these revisions, shows the true opinion and intentions of the party.

The revisions helped to correct many of the faults that the District of Columbia continuously ran into with the district itself making the necessary corrections with the support of the public.

The D.C. Criminal Code Reform Commission was formed by the D.C. Council to revise the statutes to guarantee that the revisions of offenses and punishments are precise, consistent, reasonable, and constitutional.